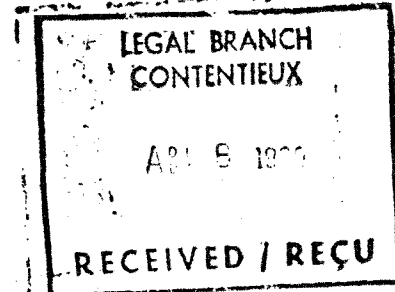




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July 31, 1990

Mr. Alain-F. Desfossés
Secretary General to the Commission
Canadian Radio-television and
Telecommunications Commission
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N2

AUG 7 1990

Dear Mr. Desfossés:

We acknowledge receipt of your letter dated June 12, 1990, in which you request the Corporation to elaborate on the reasons for which it disagrees with the complainant.

By way of historical note, the Corporation has been responding to Mr. Brown's complaints about the Corporation's coverage of environmental hypersensitivity for some years. Those complaints and the responses by the Corporation more often were communicated by telephone than by letter, and they involved employees in both programming and non-programming areas.

The idea for the item broadcast on February 13, 1990 was first considered by the Corporation in November 1988. The producer of the item for Morningside spoke with the complainant, who was quite helpful at first.

The item was delayed some months, but the complainant continued to communicate with the producer periodically; however, it soon became apparent from these discussions that Mr. Brown would only be satisfied with the story if it was Mr. Brown who told it. Mr. Brown eventually became verbally abusive and menacing to the producer.

The executive producer of Morningside also spoke with the complainant and listened to his objections and the information he offered. She concluded that the producer was taking the correct approach to the subject matter.

In preparing the program, the producer spoke to approximately six other physicians than those who were on-air, and four other environmentally hypersensitive people. It was his conclusion that there is a debate in the medical community about environmental hypersensitivity. No one - as Dr. McCourtie said in the item - disagrees that these people are sick. There is, however, widespread disagreement about why they are sick, and about methods of diagnosis.

None of the disabled persons that the producer spoke with, made the case Mr. Brown does against clinical ecologists.

Several physicians even refused to participate in the program because they feared harassment by Mr. Brown - whatever they said.

The final part of the item consisted of one hypersensitive sufferer; two physicians who agreed that she is hypersensitive, but disagree about why she is hypersensitive; and one who is skeptical. That is more than fair to the complainant's position.

The producer made the decision to use persons other than the complainant, because Mr. Brown was demonstrably irrational on the subject.

With respect to the content of Mr. Brown's complaint dated March 12, 1990, we note that its primary focus is disparaging the reputations of the persons involved in the production of the program rather than focusing on matters of substance.

By way of example, Mr. Brown states "The Morningside problem occurred in my opinion due to arrogance on the part of the producer and executive producer of the show, who refused to listen to information that should have led them to approach the subject material in a less confusing and harmful way...". In fact, both the producer and executive producer spoke to the complainant and listened to his objections and information before the item was aired.

He states elsewhere that "Due to the arrogance and bigotry of the producer organizing the segment, the Morningside item was very much like the following analogy". Mr. Brown states, in numbered paragraph 9, that CBC's coverage helped ruin the reputation of one person, and indirectly contributed to the suicide of another. That statement, is total exaggeration and untrue. In numbered paragraph 13, Mr. Brown states that the producer and executive producer "refused to listen to

or allow to be included concerns about how, because of this, playing clinical ecologists against members of other specialities is an inappropriate way to approach our story". In fact, both the producer and executive producer listened to Mr. Brown's view, objections, and information.

Mr. Brown summarizes the essence of his complaint when he states that "This complaint involves

- inaccurate and damaging information;
- the omission of material critical to the interests of the people affected;
- the denial of an opportunity to respond;
- unprofessional conduct on the part of the producer and executive producer, and
- the failure of CBC management to deal responsibly with continuing complaints about coverage of this subject (and about the same producer)."

In terms of the substance of the complaint, we are satisfied that the information in the item was accurate and that no material facts were omitted within the context of the item.

The item was introduced to the listener within the following framework:

"On the morning of March 14, 1984, Andrea Wells woke up in Gander, Newfoundland in a cold sweat. She thought that she had the flu, so she booked off work, flew home to Nova Scotia and went to bed. What she had was not the flu. It took her two years even to begin to get better. Andrea has environmental hypersensitivity, also known as total allergy syndrome or twentieth century disease; and on our environmental column today, we are going to look at this disorder, some of its causes. To do that, I'll be joined in a moment by three doctors who studied and treated allergies and hypersensitivity. They have some differing views about it, I should say in advance. First, however, I'm joined from Halifax by Andrea Wells. Tell me how ill you became? What were some of your symptoms..."

The segment with the three doctors was introduced using the Andrea Wells segment as a base, and had the following focus:

"Andrea, well, standby will you, because I want to broaden this discussion, but if you would stay with us while I turn to three physicians to see if we can learn more about the causes and effects of environmental hypersensitivity."

Differing points of view were aired. The producer and executive producer conducted themselves in a most professional manner, and the item was fair and balanced.

No one item can say everything that there is to say about any subject or be all things to all people. We were satisfied on April 30, 1990, and remain satisfied today, that the item was fair and accurate.

While we are of the view that this particular complaint is without merit, we note that Mr. Brown's comments were seriously considered by the producer of the item and the executive producer of Morningside. Whether the Corporation shares a particular opinion or not, it welcomes expressions of listener concern about its programming.

In the event that you may require additional information or wish to discuss this matter further, we remain available at your convenience.



Thomas Wm. Clark
Senior Legal Counsel

TWC:jc